

Preface (to be included on a page prior to first chapter and before a list of thank you for participation)

Virginia's wealth of natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities is second to none. Her sense of place is greatly defined by agrarian and forested landscapes, abundant natural features, especially rivers streams, lakes and the Chesapeake Bay and her wealth of cultural resources intertwined throughout rural and urban communities. The provision for outdoor recreation and attention to land conservation, enables Virginians to become acquainted with all these resources that define the Virginia's sense of place and provide a continuum between the past, present and future. The issues, findings and recommendations presented in the *2007 VOP* represent the ideas and aspirations of the people of the Commonwealth with regard to land protection and outdoor recreation. Input from numerous agencies, technical advisors, individuals, and organizations provide the basis for the *2007 VOP* recommendations. Information and comments were also received during the planning process at over 80 public meetings held across the state. Most notably, the *2007 VOP* is organized by themes including land conservation, green infrastructure and outdoor recreation. An overarching recommendation for the incorporation of a green infrastructure planning at the local, regional and state levels to facilitate outdoor recreation and land conservation. In making this recommendation and incorporating a myriad of proposals for outdoor recreation and land conservation programs, land management agencies, local and regional agencies and the private sector, the *2007 VOP* provides guidance for protection of Virginia's outdoor legacy.

Chapter I. Vision for Virginia's Outdoors

Let us leave a splendid legacy for our children... let us turn to them and say, this you inherit: guard it well, for it is far more precious than money... and once destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price. —ANSEL ADAMS, US photographer, 1902-84

Introduction

It is the vision of the 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP), the ninth VOP produced since 1966, ***to provide sound guidance and direction in meeting the state's needs for outdoor recreation and for the conservation of natural, cultural and visual resources important to Virginians' quality of life.***

Over the last two decades, the state has seen its highest rates of population growth. The development resulting from this growth has led to unprecedented conversion and loss of farm and forestland. Water quality in many streams and rivers has deteriorated resulting in significant impacts on aquatic life and outdoor recreation as well as increased costs for water treatment. Failure to integrate sound land use and transportation planning has fragmented not only natural resource, but also communities requiring people to use their automobile for nearly every aspect of their lives.

The desire to change these land use consumption patterns and conserve Virginia's open space, agrarian, forest, and outdoor recreation resources has turned into a ground swell of public support for better land use planning, protection of our natural and cultural resources, and for the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities. This was clearly shown by the voters' overwhelming passage of the 2002 Parks and Natural Areas General Obligation Bond. Furthermore, the 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey (2006 VOS) indicated that 94 percent of Virginians thought it was important or very important to protect natural and open space resources; and 92 percent stated that having access to outdoor recreation opportunities was important or very important. At the over eighty VOP public meetings held across the state during 2005 and 2006, citizens expressed an overwhelming concern and support for protecting our natural resources and open space, for enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities, and for making our communities more livable and walkable.

Virginia has truly reached a crossroad in time. The opportunities that exist now to conserve important resources, provide outdoor recreational opportunity, and build on the quality of life desired in Virginia must be seized before they are forever lost. Future generations must live with the decisions now being made. The vision for this plan, through the implementation of the guidance provided, is that when they look back, they will say "Job well done".

Issues and Trends

While numerous issues were identified in the preparation of the 2007 VOP, and are addressed in subsequent chapters, those felt to be most critical in meeting the state's

overall outdoor recreation and resource conservation needs and the trends associated with them are as follows:

Economics – Demonstrating the economic benefit of outdoor recreation and land conservation and that they are necessities for the economic health as well as the quality of life in a community is an important issue. Communities that grow smart, attract investment, revitalize urban areas, and boost tourism, while safeguarding the environment and preserving parks and open space thrive economically. Many localities recognize that by providing lands for outdoor recreation, protecting cultural resources and maintaining scenic open space and a sense of place within the community that they attracts tourists, businesses and create a high quality of life for residents. Virginians in rural, urban and suburban growth areas have voiced interest in promoting strong linkages to the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, open space and land conservation so they can compete on equal footing with other economic drivers in the decision making process. There are proven case studies supporting this concept (see Chapter V. Economic Benefits of Recreation, Tourism and Open Space).

Funding – The most significant issue in meeting the identified needs for outdoor recreation and land conservation is funding. Virginia's outdoor recreation and land conservation initiatives have struggled due to the lack of consistent, stable state funding. While much has been and will continue to be leveraged through strong public-private partnerships, there needs to be a consistent and stable source of funding at both the state and federal level for outdoor recreation and land conservation efforts. In addition, much of Virginia's park and recreational infrastructure at both the local and state level is aging and in need of major maintenance and updates. Adequate public funding for the proper operation and management of these outdoor recreation resources is critical. Thus stable funding at all governmental levels is essential to the sustained economic health and quality of life in the Commonwealth.

[Begin textbox

Citizens support the use of public funds for outdoor recreation and land conservation. The 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey shows over 94 percent of citizens believe it is important or very important to protect Virginia's natural and open space resources. It is noted that 91 percent support state funds being used for the protection of our natural resources. Most prefer state funds for land protection to be expended for the outright purchase of lands from willing sellers with future provisions for public access. End textbox]

Land Conservation and Green Infrastructure Planning

Sound resource conservation and green infrastructure planning are a paramount concern if Virginia is to sustain the quality of life for which the state is known. Current development trends and patterns are causing an escalation in the loss and/or the degradation of the state's precious cultural landscapes and natural resources. The conversion of open space, agricultural and forest land is increasing faster than the population is as a whole. Of all the development that has occurred in the last 400 years,

more than a quarter of it has taken place in the last 15 years. If Virginia continues to grow with the same development patterns as it has in the past, more land will be developed in the next 40 years than has been since the Jamestown settlement was established in 1607. In 2000, the Virginia population was 7,078,501 and by 2020, it is projected to be the 12th most populous state with 8.6 million (Virginia Employment Commission, February 3, 2007). Additionally, from 1990 to 2000, Virginia experienced a 45 percent increase in impervious (non-porous) surfaces such as roads. As population growth continues, we must be aware of land consumption patterns in order to ensure a sustainable future.

To assist in assessing land consumption, the Virginia Vulnerability Model was developed by DCR in an effort to map predicted areas of high growth across the Commonwealth. This Geographic Information System (GIS) based model provides a large-scale picture of statewide growth patterns. The growth prediction may be used as an indication of potential land use change over time. The model can help in the development of a green infrastructure plan, which would determine where Virginia's land conservation priorities should be located and facilitate an integrated approach to land conservation, planning and development. Information on the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment and the Green Infrastructure modeling effort, is found on the VCLNA website at <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dnh/vclna.htm>.

[Insert Growth Prediction Maps(to be included on a 8 ½ x 11 sheet)]

[subheading under Land Conservation and Green Infrastructure]**Water Quality**

The enjoyment of popular outdoor recreation activities such as fishing, swimming and boating are dependent on access to clean water. Four of the ten most popular outdoor recreation activities, swimming, beach use, fishing and boating, are water dependent. Water quality must be maintained not only to ensure that streams and rivers in the Commonwealth are suitable for recreational activities but also to ensure adequate drinking water for existing and future populations. Watershed management strategies, incorporated into green infrastructure planning, will be essential in insuring that the Commonwealth's bays, rivers and streams are maintained or restored to a level of quality that will meet the needs of both current and future generations.

[subheading under Land Conservation and Green Infrastructure]**Livable/Walkable Communities**

During the VOP public meetings, citizens across the Commonwealth expressed a desire for walkable/bikeable communities. Current development patterns often require people to drive in order to run the most routine errands or even to reach local schools, often located only short distances away. With issues over health and obesity along with rising fuel costs and transportation concerns have grown significantly over the past five years. Virginians are asking for alternate options for commuting and safely traversing their communities without having to use their automobile. An indication of this trend is shown by the major shift in driving for pleasure as a recreational activity. In 1965, driving for pleasure was the highest ranked outdoor recreation activity in Virginia. In

2006 it had declined to the 3rd most popular activity with only about 50 percent of the population participating. Driving was displaced by walking for pleasure, now the number one outdoor recreation activity with over 70 percent of the population participating. Livable and walkable communities offer alternate transportation while also connecting community with trails and sidewalks. Such communities maximize parklands, open space and recreational services so that each is integrated into the fabric of everyday life.

Outdoor Recreation

The strong turnout at the VOP public meetings and the fact data from the *2006 VOS* showed that 92 percent of Virginians rated access to outdoor recreation opportunities as very important or important to them demonstrates the importance of protecting the outdoor recreation resource base as well as providing new opportunities. It is through collective outdoor experiences that one develops an appreciation and respect for our natural resources. The availability of these resources and the experiences enjoyed by Virginians using them has resulted in elevating the desire to insure their existence for future generations.

Public lands offering a myriad of active and passive recreation opportunities are needed throughout the Commonwealth to meet the needs of a growing population. Citizens want additional public lands that are accessible for a variety of outdoor recreational activities and as places to experience and interact with nature.

The integration of parks and open space into a localities comprehensive plan with emphasis on components such as hiking and biking trails, water access and blueways, community parks, and local recreation centers is critical to improving the quality of life. The integration of these activities in community planning make walkable/livable community a reality. Local parks and recreation departments must work in concert with economic development, tourism and planning departments to create a community vision that connects open space, land conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities. Citizens across the state are emphatic that these important outdoor recreation resources must continue to be acquired and protected.

[subheading under Outdoor Recreation] Water access, trails, greenways, and blueways

The two highest outdoor recreation needs indicated in the *2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey* were additional public access to Virginia's waters and trails for walking and bicycling. Over the past fifteen years, the growth in walking for pleasure, bicycling and water related activities has grown and thus the need for additional resources to meet the demand. To help in meeting this demand, linear linkages on land known as greenways, and on water as blueways or water trails are being planned and implemented. Greenways are often established in the riparian buffer alongside a river or stream and may be suitable for trail development. In these cases, selected sites along the trail within the greenway may also serve as water trail or blueway access points. Localities must also consider local planning for specific water access sites for swimming, boating, fishing and beach use. When planning linear corridors to meet the growing needs for trails and water access, a cross section of water and land-based resources, must be considered. If

strategically planned, greenways and blueways may enhance human and wildlife connections by creating outdoor recreation within communities and conserving important lands for habitat and ecological health.

[subheading under Outdoor Recreation]**Nature Deficit Disorder**

An alarming trend in attention deficit and hyper activity in many youths across the country today has been tied back to a lack of time spent in the outdoor environment. This lack of interaction with our natural world in a meaningful way has been termed by author, Richard Louv as nature deficit disorder. Television, Internet and computer games compete for and often dominate a child's recreation and leisure time. Children are spending less time outside and not developing important links with our natural world that have been found important to childhood development. The ability to recreate outdoors in safe places is now being recognized as essential to social development and to a healthy lifestyle. A concerted effort must be made to link environmental education and healthy lifestyle initiatives to encourage citizens to maintain a connection with nature. Time spent recreating in nature builds self-esteem and fosters personal and spiritual growth. For all ages, easily accessible parks are necessary for providing recreation, inspiration and essential respite from the stressors associated with an increasingly fast-paced and technological environment. If existing and future generations do not experience nature, support for Virginia's natural resources could wane, breaking Virginia's tradition for the love and stewardship of the outdoors.

What's New in the 2007 VOP?

The 2007 VOP marks a significant milestone in that it now provides official guidance in land conservation (see Chapter III Land Conservation) for the purposes of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF). As a result of land conservation emphasis, each planning region includes a new land conservation map showing existing protected lands. These maps, for the first time, show all protected lands including federal, state, local, and those protected under easements. The 2007 VOP also contains a new thematic organization centered on the themes of outdoor recreation, land conservation, and green infrastructure. By thematically addressing these themes continuity between program areas and land management agencies as well as opportunities for partnership are highlighted. Other parts of the 2007 VOP that are new include specific sections that address emerging issues such as:

- Blueways and water access to link land based sites along streams and rivers
- Virginia watersheds to address water quality for outdoor recreation
- Environmental and land stewardship education to address both the development of a conservation ethic and nature deficit disorder
- Health based on active living concepts related to outdoor recreation opportunities
- The impact of climate change on outdoor recreation, and
- Transportation programs supporting outdoor recreation and active living within livable/walkable communities

[Begin Textbox]

2007 VOP planning process

- The planning process for the *2007 VOP* began with an assessment of implementation of the previous *2002 VOP*.
- An inventory of local outdoor recreation facilities was conducted in 2005.
- A series of over 40 public meetings were held to receive input from stakeholders including, citizens, organizations, localities and planning districts.
- The *2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey* polled over 3,000 families and reported citizen input for numerous natural resource and outdoor recreation topics.
- Outdoor recreation and conservation planners conducted research on trends and alternatives to address the issues identified in the public meetings.
- A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), appointed by the director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, convened five times to provide input into the *Virginia Outdoor Plan*.
- Draft text was written, edited and revised based on comments from the TAC, citizens and other local, regional and state agencies.
- Individual meetings and interviews were held with planning district commission staff to receive direct input about findings and recommendations for the planning regions.
- The draft *2007 VOP* was posted on the website for citizen review and comment.
- A second series of over 40 public meetings were held across the state in the planning regions to present the draft findings, recommendations and receive additional public input.
- Input from the public meetings and written comments were considered in the development of the final document.

End Textbox]

Thematic focus: Outdoor Recreation, Land Conservation, Green Infrastructure

The *2007 VOP* focuses on three interrelated themes, outdoor recreation, land conservation and green infrastructure. These themes resulted from consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee and from public meeting input. Emphasizing the themes of outdoor recreation, land conservation and green infrastructure helps guide the use and protection of Virginia's outdoors for future generations. The thematic focus encourages local, regional, state and federal governments, private organizations and citizens to link outdoor recreation and land conservation through green infrastructure land planning.

How the 2007 VOP Addresses Issues

The *2007 VOP* gives specific recommendations for each program area, each land management agency responsible for outdoor recreation and land conservation and in each planning region throughout the Commonwealth. The recommendations made in the main thematic areas of the plan, outdoor recreation, land conservation, and green infrastructure address the major issues effecting the way land conservation and outdoor recreation needs are met. Program and region specific recommendations found throughout the *2007*

VOP further explain these overarching thematic recommendations. It is these thematic recommendations that will aid in setting the tone for continued success over the next five years in meeting the extraordinary needs placed on the Commonwealth to balance outdoor recreation needs and resource protection with unprecedented population growth. The table below summarizes recommendations for each of the major thematic categories.

Outdoor Recreation	<p>A steady source of state and federal funding is needed to meet and sustain Virginia's outdoor recreation needs for a growing population.</p> <p>Provide technical support and funding to establish and promote local parks and recreation departments to meet local outdoor recreation needs.</p> <p>Provide technical support and funding for regional park authorities and water access authorities to acquire, develop and manage resources to meet regional outdoor recreation needs.</p> <p>Encourage local provision of close to home outdoor recreation opportunities to meet changing trends in recreation. Consider demographic and cultural diversity in addressing local and regional outdoor recreation needs.</p> <p>Continuation of existing and the development of new partnerships with the private sector will be necessary to meet outdoor recreation needs.</p> <p>Education regarding the link between land conservation and outdoor recreation and the economic benefits of preserving these resources is needed.</p>
Land Conservation	<p>Strong state tax incentives for land conservation should be maintained and a dedicated source of funding established at both state and federal levels.</p> <p>Green infrastructure modeling and sound land use decision making must be</p>

	<p>prominent at the local, regional and state levels to effectively conserve lands for future generations.</p> <p>Local, state agencies and private organizations must develop a method of targeting preservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.</p> <p>Meeting conservation goals will require an expansion of partnerships among agencies and the private sector.</p> <p>Organizations undertaking land-preservation projects should strive to ensure that protected lands offer a wide range of public benefits including water quality protection, habitat preservation and public access.</p> <p>Education regarding the economic, cultural and natural benefits of land conservation is needed.</p>
--	---

Green Infrastructure	<p>Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and obtained.</p> <p>Regional and local governments should adopt and implement a green infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.</p> <p>The Commonwealth's state agencies and their conservation partners should establish and coordinate a statewide task force to promote green infrastructure planning.</p> <p>Regional and state agencies should continue to educate and train leaders, elected officials and staff of local, regional and state agencies and conservation organizations about green infrastructure planning and its relation to economic vitality of the Commonwealth, outdoor recreation and land conservation.</p> <p>Continued data development for green infrastructure planning is needed.</p>
-----------------------------	---

Forty Years of Progress for Virginia's Outdoors

The first Virginia Outdoors Plan, *Virginia's Common Wealth* printed in 1965 set the stage for outdoor recreation and conservation planning in Virginia. Using this plan as a benchmark for outdoor recreation and conservation, the 2007 VOP recommendations continue to reflect on the philosophy and objectives formulated in the first outdoors plan. Some issues addressed in the 2007 VOP were originally raised in 1965, but have not been attained. Many of the objectives outlined in this first 1965 plan have been accomplished and are summarized below.

[Insert Table]

Summary of 1965 Recommendations and Accomplishments to Date

1965 Recommendation	Explanation of Progress
1 – Adopt a State outdoor recreation and open space policy.	The Open-Space Land Act (§ 10.1-1700 et seq.) from the Code of Virginia comprehensively addresses outdoor recreation and open space policy.

2- Create a Commission of Outdoor Recreation	A Commission of Outdoor Recreation was created in 1966. The Commission functioned separately updating the Virginia Outdoors Plan and implementing recommendations in this plan until 1983 when the commission was folded into the Department of Conservation, Recreation and Historic Resources. Today, the function of the Commission continues in the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.
3- Enlarge and improve the State Park system.	The 1965 goal was set at 36 parks to be developed by 1976. The state park system has grown to include 34 developed state parks and the land for five more bringing the current state park total to 39. Twenty-eight of the state parks are protected in perpetuity by the Land and Water Conservation Act.
4- The state should aid localities in resource conservation and development: a) research guidance and technical assistance b) matching funds c) provision of legal powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) DCR continues to provide research guidance and technical assistance to localities for outdoor recreation and conservation initiatives. b) Grants appropriate to local governments pursuing outdoor recreation and conservation are outlined in Chapter VI of the <i>2007 VOP</i>. c) The Code of Virginia makes provisions for including outdoor recreation, conservation and community planning in the local comprehensive planning process.
5- Encourage greater use of Regional Planning Commissions and Regional Park Authorities	<p>Over the years regional planning commissions have expanded to twenty-two across the Commonwealth. Each are supported by member localities and embrace outdoor recreation, cultural resources and land conservation in regional planning projects.</p> <p>Three regional park authorities currently operate in Virginia. These include Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, Fairfax County Park Authority and the Upper Valley Park Authority. In addition, under separate Virginia Code authorization, two public access authorities have been established in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. Both received federal seed funding for establishment from Virginia's Coastal Zone Management Program.</p>

6- Establish a system of scenic byways and provide for recreation access roads.	<p>The Virginia Byways recognition program began in 1966, when the Virginia General Assembly passed the Scenic Highways and Virginia Byways Act (Code of Virginia §33.1-62). As of spring 2006, over 2,780 miles of roads have been designated Virginia Byways. In addition, four National Scenic Byways, totaling about 359 miles and the three USFS byways totaling about 96 miles have also been recognized in Virginia.</p> <p>The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and DCR also administer the Recreational Access Roads Program providing state funds for the construction of vehicular access roads to public recreational areas.</p>
7- Make our highways more pleasant.	
8 - Accelerate the program of Commission of Game & Inland Fisheries	<p>The Commission of Game & Inland Fisheries is now known as the Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (DGIF). DGIF manages wildlife management areas and many public access sites to the state waters. Currently there are ??? public access sites and 37 Wildlife Management Areas. In recent years the non-game division of DGIF has expanded and realized success in developing and managing the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail (see DGIF subsection in Chapter IX).</p>
9 – Encourage the multiple uses of public lands to allow maximum recreation opportunity consistent with the land’s primary purpose.	<p>Cooperative agreements with the USFS, NPS, USFWS, DGIF and DOF encourage the multiple uses of lands on state and federal properties. Also, at the local level schools have and are encouraged to open recreation land and facilities to the community.</p>
10 – Encourage advance planning and land acquisition in area of major water impoundments.	<p>As population grows and localities expand, the demand for additional water impoundments has increased. State agencies have been actively involved in the new planning of existing reservoirs particularly when they are due for FERC re-licensing. This process often results in enhanced recreational opportunities. Planning and cooperation with regional water authorities and local government is now a part on any new reservoir planning.</p>
11 – Develop the recreation opportunities created by Soil and Water Conservation Districts	<p>Where appropriate, Soil and Water Conservation District impoundments have been used for expanded recreational activity.</p>
12 – Recognize the vital role of the individuals	<p>The travel industry continues to be a mainstay of</p>

and the travel industry.	Virginia's economy. The travel industry recognizes the fundamental importance of an adequate system of state parks and is currently marketing outdoor recreation opportunities. The relationship and partnership of sharing user data including visitation, demand, supply and needs information with Virginia Tourism and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources is continuing to grow and to address the increasing need and demand for outdoor recreation by the traveling public.
13- Undertake a study of the relation of land taxation to the preservation of open space.	In 2006, Virginia is known to have one of the most progressive land taxation laws for conservation and open space.
14- Provide for acquisition of scenic and conservation easements.	With the establishment of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Virginia has become one of the nations leaders in holding conservation easements. In addition, many non-profit land trusts have developed over the past decade playing an ever important role in the use of easements to protect land.
15 – Initiate water resource and river basin studies.	In 2003, DEQ reorganized to establish a new division, the Water Resources Division responsible for water resources management.
16 – Accelerate marine resources and beach erosion study.	The Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS) was founded in [REDACTED] and continues to research shoreline erosion as well as partner with the Virginia Institute for Marine Science on marine related issues. Need to check with Soil and water and see what is now occurring SEAS as a separate program I believe was eliminated a number of years ago in one of the budget cuts.
17 – Provide guidelines for planned communities and cluster development.	Enabling legislation has been developed and exists for planned communities and cluster development to be considered by local governments responsible for determining development plans within communities.
18 – Create an Historic Landmarks Commission	The Historic Landmarks Commission was created in 1966 and is now known as the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.
19 – Establish the Virginia Outdoors Foundation	The Code of Virginia established the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) in _____. The VOF currently holds the 2 nd most easements in the nation. In 2006 alone over 70,000 acres of land were conserved.
20 – Establish the Virginia Outdoors Fund to	This fund was established and has been administered

implement the Virginia Outdoors Plan	in Virginia first by the Commission of Outdoor Recreation and now by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. While there has been no stable funding source, and funding has declined dramatically over the past decade, over the history of the program since 1966 more than 80 million dollars has been made available in matching grants for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation resources.
21 – Create greater awareness of the value of natural resources and environmental geography.	The establishment of Virginia Naturally, a multi-agency and organization effort that serves as a conduit for education, has been important especially with school age students and both formal and non-formal educators. In addition, the Virginia State Parks: Your Backyard Classroom curriculum developed for educators to use with Virginia's state parks as well as Project Underground have proven to be an effective environmental educational tools.

While significant challenges exist, the Commonwealth can take pride in accomplishments made in the past forty years, especially putting legislation in place that provides the needed tools to meet demands for outdoor recreation and land conservation. The 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan provides guidance and direction for what should now be done if Virginia is to preserve her outdoor legacy for future generations to enjoy. The information and recommendations that follow will assist all in charting a course to preserve Virginia's "Commonwealth".

Resources:

Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information Services Division,
<http://VELMA.VIRTUALMI.com> or <http://VAEMPLOY.com>.